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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 002146

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [KCOR](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: CORRUPTION CHARGES COULD OUST SOME MINISTERS

Classified By: Poloff Edward Bestic for Reasons 1.5 B and D

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Parliament is preparing to vote, November 25 or 26, on a report identifying six ministers and President Kabila's Chief of Staff as involved in corruption. If the investigating committee's report is accepted by the Parliamentary plenary session, the ministers will be dismissed, and President Kabila likely will also relieve his Chief of Staff. Ousting the six ministers could spark a wider cabinet shuffle, for which at least some of the components, particularly the RCD, seem prepared. If these individuals do lose their jobs--an outcome that is possible but not at all certain--it would be a positive development, because it will set a precedent in terms of good governance and parliamentary oversight. END SUMMARY.

Kabila Threatens Action

12. (U) Amidst much media fanfare, National Assembly president Olivier Kamitatu delivered to President Joseph Kabila on Nov. 23 the findings of a parliamentary investigation of official corruption. (Note: Kamitatu is also secretary-general of Jean-Pierre Bemba's Congo Liberation Movement (MLC). End Note.) Kabila's spokesman, Kudura Kasongo, issued a press statement the same day confirming receipt of the report and promising that the president would "draw conclusions" from it, "in accordance with the law." The statement reminded readers that Kabila wrote to parliament on May 19 about the problem of official corruption and warned at that time that anyone who broke the law would be brought to justice. Meanwhile, the Nov. 24 headline of pro-Kabila daily "L'Avenir" read, "Joseph Kabila Without Pity - Corrupt Ministers and Officials to Prison."

Parliament to Vote

13. (C) Kamitatu told the Ambassador at a dinner November 23 that he plans to present the report at a plenary of the National Assembly commission on Nov. 26, and is working to arrange a straight yes-or-no vote on its findings and recommendations. Senior parliamentary figures already expressed their support for the document in closed session, but Kamitatu is continuing to lobby behind the scenes because the final outcome is still unclear. (Note: Kamitatu's cabinet director told poloff the plenary could take place Nov. 25. End Note.)

The Lineup

14. (C) Thomas Luhaka, MLC spokesman and leader of its parliamentary group, told poloff Nov. 24 that the report cites senior officials from all the major factions. The list includes: from Kabila's PPRD, presidency chief of staff Evariste Boshab and energy minister Kalema Lusona; from the MLC, public works minister Jose Endundo; from the RCD-G, higher education minister Joseph Mudumbi (and not defense minister Jean-Pierre Ondekane, a name cited in the press); from the RCD-N, foreign trade minister Roger Lumbala; and from the unarmed political opposition, mines minister Eugene Diomi and transport minister Joseph Olengankhoy. Luhaka said the allegations against Endundo are not as serious as the others and Bemba wants the National Assembly to "distinguish" between individuals and hold public hearings, but Kamitatu fears that if the MLC defends Endundo, the other factions will follow suit and stick up for their own ministers. Luhaka said one of the cases in the report involves a \$40m debt owed to SNEEL, the electricity parastatal, by the government of Congo-Brazzaville. According to Luhaka, one thing the report does not mention is that a top SNEEL official fingered Kabila himself, as well as his sister Janet, Congo-B President Sassou Nguessou, and Sassou's cousin in this scam, whereby Congo-B paid less than the full amount and Kabila family members in turn received a handsome payment for themselves. Luhaka understands his own chief, Bemba, may also be implicated in this deal, further complicating matters.

RCD-G Eager to Fire its Own

15. (C) South Kivu vice-governor Thomas Nziratimana of the RCD-G told poloff Nov. 23 that RCD-G leader Ruberwa and his supporters have wanted to axe Mudumbi and Ondekane for months, because they "betrayed" the RCD-G by actively opposing Ruberwa's decision to boycott the transitional government in August. (Note: This came days after the Aug. 13 massacre of Congolese refugees in Burundi. End Note.)

Between Ruberwa's indecision and the RCD-G's relative weakness, the party did not remove the two immediately, but the taint of corruption provides a handy pretext for removing them that simultaneously limits Ondekane's and Mudumbi's chances of taking supporters with them. Adolphe Onusumba, a former president of the RCD-G and currently vice-president of the National Assembly, is the leading candidate to replace Ondekane. Nziratimana commented wryly that Onusumba is eager to get the job, not because he feels strongly about Ondekane's incompetence but rather as a chance to grab money and power.

COMMENT

16. (C) Very few public figures in the DRC are blameless when it comes to questions of corruption. In that sense, the investigative report may be seen as more a pretext than a real reason for sacking ministers. Kabila has reportedly been looking to replace Boshab for some time, possibly with former information minister Kikaya Bin Karubi. Likewise, the RCD-G has been itching to remove some of its own ministers for months. If the ministers identified as corrupt are fired--an outcome that is possible but not at all certain--it would be a positive development, however, because it sets a useful precedent in terms of good governance and parliamentary oversight. END COMMENT.
MEECE